

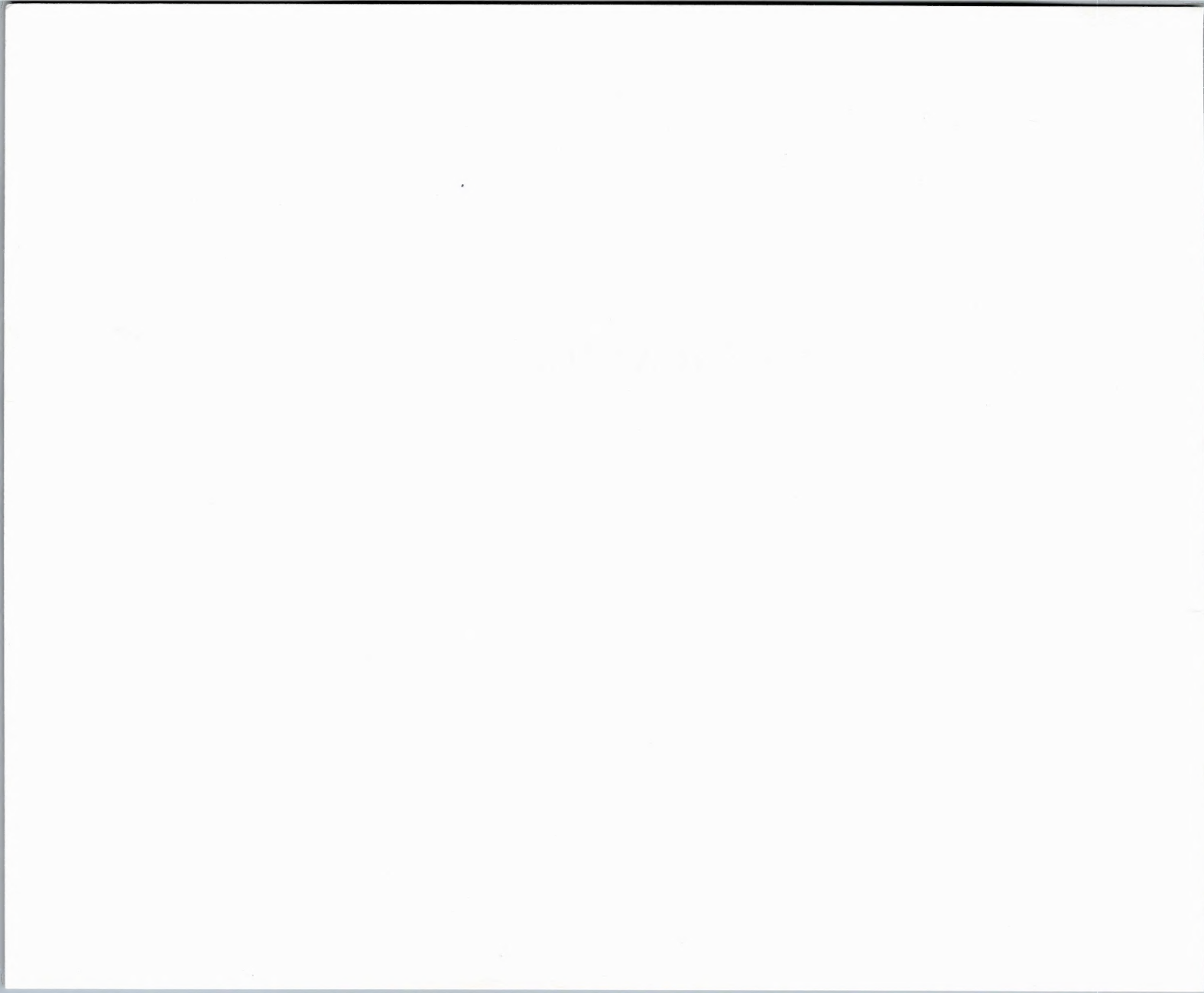
PARLIAMENT
THE LAND
AND
BUILDINGS
FROM 1840





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PARLIAMENT

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THE LAND AND BUILDINGS FROM 1840

A brief history of the buildings on Parliament Grounds

using illustrations from the Alexander Turnbull Library

Rod Cook

1988

Parliamentary Service

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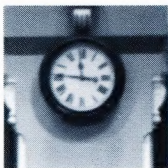
Wellington



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1 INTRODUCTION

Little of significance is recorded about any part of Parliament Grounds before the arrival of the New Zealand Company Settlers. The land where the Beehive now stands was described as a swampy clay mound; Te Puni, who had tried to grow a crop of potatoes on it, declared it was good for nothing. We know that an elderly Maori man was living near what is now Bowen Street and that he continued to live there after Wakefield had established himself.

Before the settlers departed from England they had purchased land based on an imaginary town plan which included sites for the President's Palace and the Houses of Legislature. This plan is reproduced in Dick Scott's pictorial history, "Inheritors of a Dream" p 27. After the settlers arrived and after it was decided to establish the town in Wellington rather than the Hutt Valley, Mein Smith, the Company's surveyor, set about adapting the ideal plan to the peculiarities of the hills and the harbour. The President's Palace disappeared from the plan but land for a government reserve remained. Colonel Wakefield by building his house on this reserve gave emphasis to his position as leader of the Colony.



Barracks Hotel Port Nicholson

2 THE GOVERNMENT DOMAIN 1840–1848



Wakefield's house with its stables and staff quarters was not the first European building on the Government Reserve. The first building was a raupo whare built for Richard Barrett as a grog shop on the corner of Lambton Quay and Charlotte Street (the southern part of Molesworth Street). Later Barrett bought a prefabricated building from Dr Evans and had no further use for the raupo whare. His new building was erected on the other side of Charlotte Street near the steps to the tunnel through to the Railway Station. From grog shop, the raupo whare went on to many other uses: a church, an early school, the Library and Dr Knox's museum. In 1842, one of Wellington's disastrous fires prompted among other things the Raupo Ordinance forbidding all raupo thatching, and in 1844 the whare was removed. Barrett had sold his hotel to Charles Suisted in 1841 but as 'Barretts' it continued its role for many years as the centre of Wellington's social and political life.

Wakefield's house on the Government Reserve is charmingly illustrated in Brees' "Pictorial Illustrations of New Zealand". A group of ladies on lively horses prance up the manorial hill to a similar dismounted group waiting by the house. The verandah by which they stand is elegantly supported by branching posts straight from the bush.

Brees also illustrated the first St Pauls built to the west of Wakefield's house on the same reserve. At first the intention had been to build this

The raupo whare and Barretts Hotel as painted in 1840 by Captain Stanley R N of HMS Britomart. Original owned by the Royal Society Tasmania.

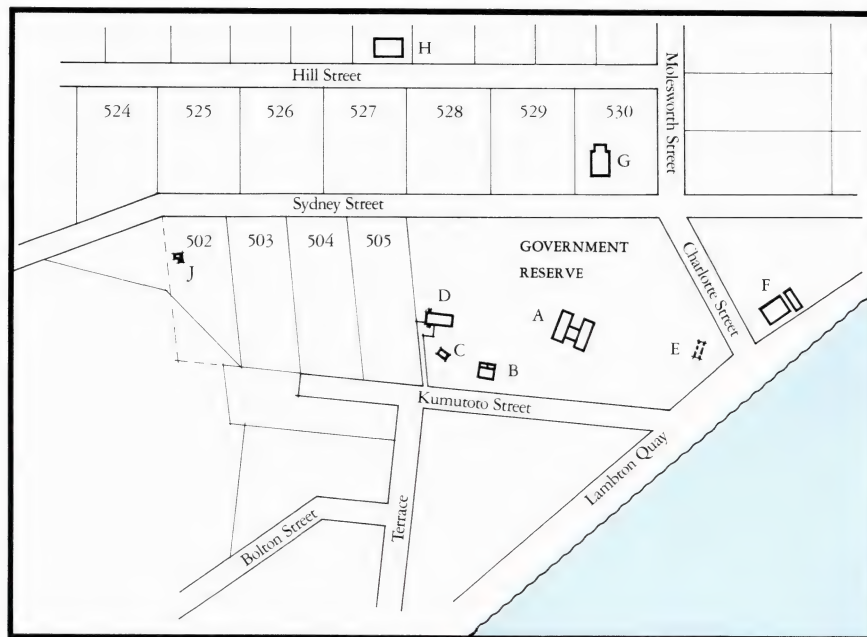
church on a site up Bolton Street, but Bishop Selwyn realised that the site was quite unsuitable. To resolve the problem of where to build the main Anglican church Governor Fitzroy agreed that part of the Government Reserve be used despite protests from other churches. Towards the end of 1866, the present "Old" St Pauls was built in Mulgrave Street and some materials from the first were reused in the cemetery chapel. The site of the first St Pauls would lie across Museum Street near the rear entry to the Beehive basement. After Wakefield's death his house was purchased for Lieutenant Governor Eyre. Before Eyre could move in, however, the great earthquake of 1848 so severely damaged the brick Colonial Hospital that the patients were moved into Government House. The subsequent use of timber for major buildings in Wellington dates from this event.

Colonel Wakefield's house,
looking towards The Terrace
on the left and Kelburn
behind the house. The main
part of Wakefield's house was
brought from England in
prefabricated form.





St Pauls, from a drawing by
Samuel Brees in 1845,
viewed from present
Broadcasting House site.
Native orderly's house to
right; Wakefield's house in
background.



MAP 1 (ABOUT 1845)

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| A | Government House
(ex Col. Wakefield) | F | Government Offices
(ex Barretts) |
| B | Stables | G | House - William Fox |
| C | House - Native Orderly | H | St. Marys |
| D | St. Pauls | J | House - Walter Mantell |
| E | Raupo Whare | | |

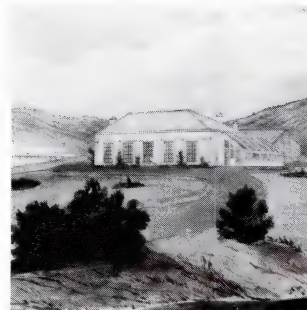


CEREMONY OF LAYING THE FOUNDATION-STONE OF THE NEW HOUSES OF ASSEMBLY, WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND.

3 THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL

Across Sydney Street from Government House the Provincial Council purchased two town acres (529 and 530) and was granted a third (528) by the Crown on which to build the Provincial Chambers in 1857. Section 530 was purchased from William Fox and 529 from one of the many absentee English landowners. Fox was not the first owner of the land he occupied; he had purchased it from Henry Moring, a farmer in the Hutt Valley, to whom it had been granted by the New Zealand Company. A drawing dated 1843 illustrates Fox's house; a formal, hip roofed house with tall windows to the floor and a conservatory on the north wall. Quite a contrast to the more simple gable roofed, verandahed "colonial" style of the Wakefield house.

The Provincial Council Chambers must have been one of our first design competitions for a public building. Dr Featherston, the first Superintendant of the Wellington Province, offered a prize for the best design for a House of General Assembly and Provincial Government. The proposal to build a "House of General Assembly" was an indication of Wellington's ambitions and a response to the resolution passed at the Session of the Assembly of 1856 in Auckland which determined that the Assembly of the following year would be held in Wellington. George Single won the competition, the stone was laid on 9 March 1857 and C R Carter who was also a design competitor built it for the cost of about \$14,000. Carter had worked on the panelling



Sir William Fox's first house, corner of Molesworth Street and Hill Street; Wakefield's house and St Pauls in background; site in front of Library.

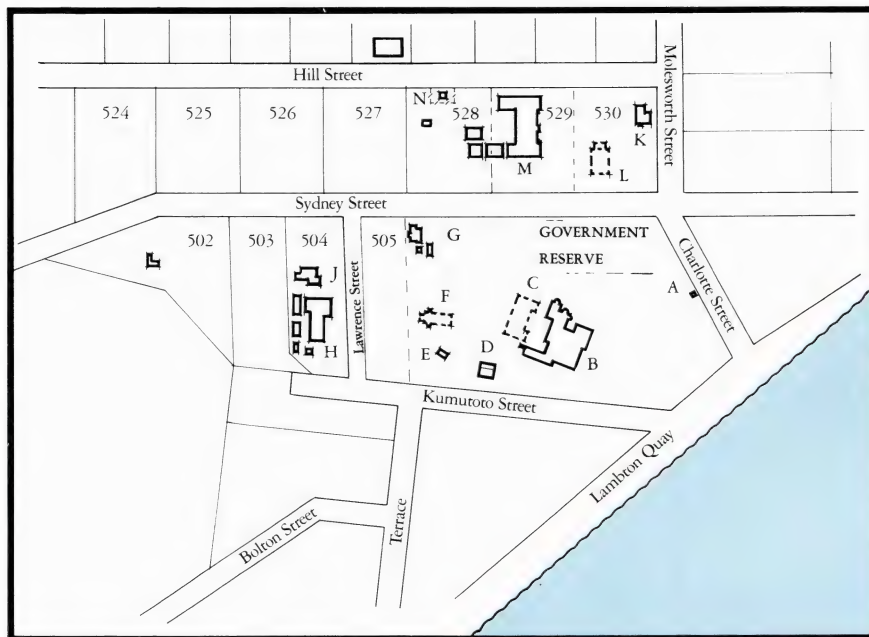
Opposite: engraving from "Illustrated London News" showing Featherston laying the foundation stone for the Wellington Provincial Chambers on site of Parliamentary Library.



Provincial Chambers about
1861; facing towards
Molesworth Street; Hill
Street on right.

for the House of Commons before coming to New Zealand and it would be interesting to know how this experience influenced his competition entry. He remarked in his "Recollections" that a considerable portion of the interior design for his entry was embodied in the new building.

Between 1857 when the Provincial Chambers were completed and 1865 when the buildings were purchased by the Central Government for the General Assembly some minor additions were made to the original building. It would appear these were only modest cottage-like attachments.



MAP 2 (LATE 1860's)

- | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------|---|------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| A | Guard Room | G | Gardener's Cottage and | M | General Assembly |
| B | Government House | | Glasshouse | | Building (ex Provincial |
| C | Temporary Ballroom | H | Museum | | Chambers) |
| | (1869) | J | House - Museum | N | Weather Station |
| D | Stables | | Director | | |
| E | House | K | House - Custodian | | |
| F | St Pauls | L | House - William Fox | | |



4 GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND GOVERNMENT HOUSE 1865 TO 1871



Wellington's ambition to be the capital city was realised in 1865 when the capital was transferred from Auckland.

The Provincial Chambers were purchased from the Wellington Provincial Government with an immediate effect on the building.

From 1865, starting with a library, through to 1873 with completion of the Legislative Council Chamber there was a steady accumulation of additions and modifications eventually resulting in the familiar view of the General Assembly Building as seen from Sydney Street. All this construction was in timber. It included new chambers for the House of Representatives and the Legislative Council, the library and new offices. Work was also carried out to replace timber in the Old Provincial Chambers which was in danger of collapsing from dry rot. It says much for the talents of William Clayton, who became Colonial Architect in 1869, and his assistants, one of whom was Thomas Turnbull, that the collection of add-ons was able to be unified to give the appearance of a single design. That the add-ons and the original were all in the Gothic style and all built of timber helped in this illusion of unity.

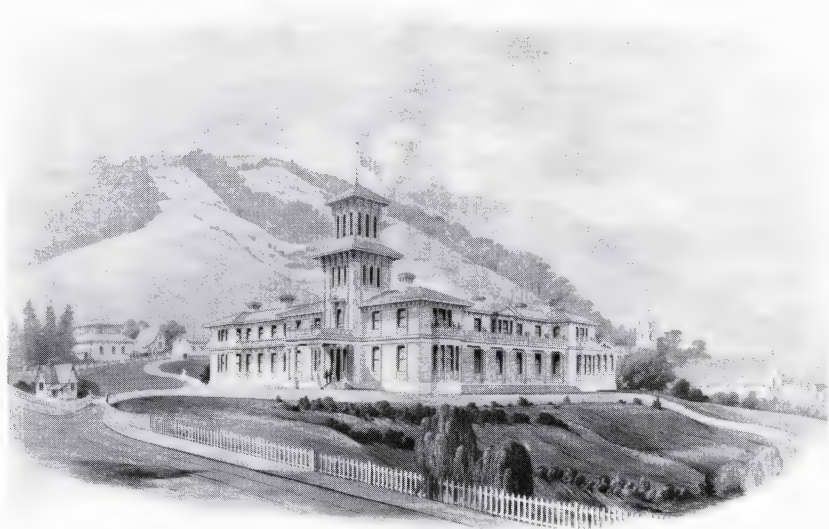
William Clayton had gone into partnership with William Mason in 1864 and it was Mason who prepared the first designs for a new Government House in 1864. Mason retired from the practice in 1865 and in 1868 Clayton put forward his own design for Government

General Assembly Building
about 1875 from Sydney
Street; House of
Representatives to the right,
Legislative Council Chamber
to the left. Probably five
separate structures have been
integrated into this one
building.

House. Sir George Grey had advocated the purchase of land at Lowry Bay for a new Government House and a cottage was built for him there. Before it was occupied he retired and his successor, Sir George Bowen, who had no wish to live at Lowry Bay, pressed for the sale of the land as a contribution to the cost of a new Government House to replace the “wretched little cottage” on the Government Reserve. Clayton’s design was accepted and the building was completed in 1871.

Opposite: General Assembly Building; interior of the House of Representatives; date unknown, but probably 1890’s.

Clayton’s design for Government House; drawing by George O’Brien. View from Bowen Street with Colonial Museum on middle left; General Assembly Building (Provincial Chambers) and St Mary’s to right.







5 EXPANSION OF THE GOVERNMENT DOMAIN 1865-1875

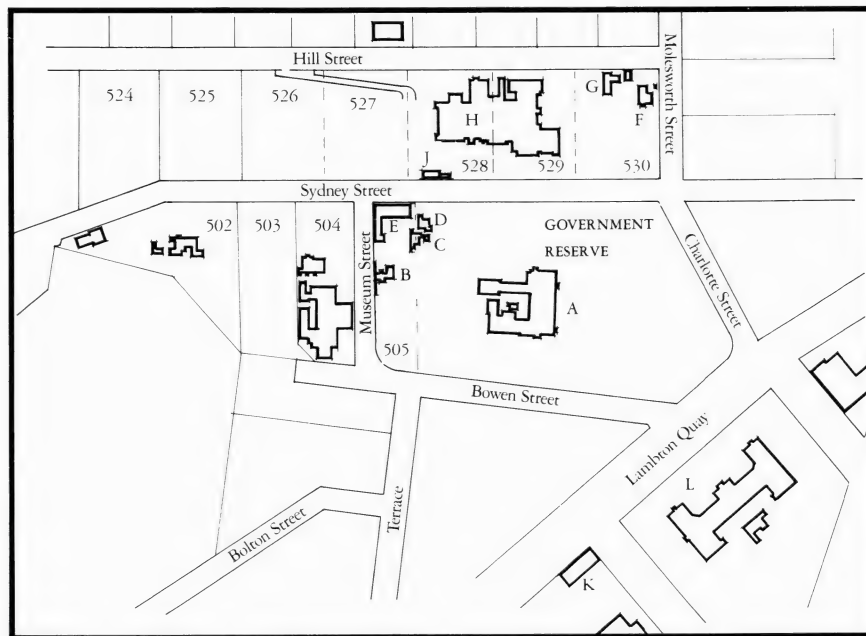
In 1865 the Crown purchased from Edward Daniell the two town acre sections (504 and 505) immediately to the West of the Government House reserve. These two sections had been granted to Daniell by the New Zealand Company as part of his selection.

The Colonial Museum and a house for its first director, James Hector, were built on section 504 in about 1865 while part of section 505 was developed as a road in front of the Museum connecting Kumutoto Street (Bowen Street) with Sydney Street. This new street was called Lawrence Street after Captain E Lawrence RN, a director of the New Zealand company and Daniell's father-in-law. The Thomas Ward map of 1891 shows it renamed as Museum Street; it was moved to its present location in 1912. The line of Lawrence Street would have been approximately through the courtyard between Bowen State Building and Broadcasting House. The remainder of section 505 was added to Government House grounds and on this piece of land the stables, laundry and coachman's house were built. The development of Government House was completed by 1878 or 1879 and no substantial change took place until after the fire of 1907.

North of Sydney Street and to the West of the General Assembly grounds, two additional town acres, 526 and 527 were purchased by the Crown about 1870. This is the land at present lying between the Parliamentary Library and 81 Hill Street. These sections had been

View from Hill Street about 1875; General Assembly Building on left; Government House with gardener's house, laundry, stables and coachman's house in centre; Lawrence Street (Museum Street) and Colonial Museum on right.

allocated to Thomas Arnold, the Rector of Rugby, an important educator and a great advocate of the concept of British Imperialism. He also had land at Picton, Makara and Ohariu. One son, Thomas, spent some time in Wellington in 1848, another son, Matthew, the poet and critic, inherited these properties after his mother's death. In 1873 the excavation of sections 526 and 527 to form the flat area used mainly by the Ministry of Works from about 1914 to 1986 began. The excavated material was taken by dray up the ramp to Hill Street and then down to the foreshore to provide a site for the construction in 1875 of the wooden Government Building. As the memory of the 1848 and 1855 earthquakes faded, the fear of fire began to loom larger than fear of earthquake. There had been a number of disastrous fires in Wellington and the extensive construction of timber buildings increased the danger. Clayton had advocated concrete for the Government Building when tenders were called in 1873 but the lowest tender was for timber and this was accepted. Thomas Turnbull was a vigorous advocate of masonry buildings and on the basis of his experience in San Francisco believed they could be made adequately resistant to earthquake. His advocacy of masonry was to affect the next addition to the General Assembly Building.



MAP 3 (1891)

- | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------|---|---------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| A | Government House | H | General Assembly Building | L | Wooden Government Building |
| B | House – Coachman | J | Electricity Generating Building | | |
| C | Laundry | K | Police Station and Law Courts | | |
| D | House – Gardener | | | | |
| E | Stables | | | | |
| F | House – Custodian | | | | |
| G | Fire Brigade Station | | | | |

6 BRICK AND POWER 1883-1894

The completion of the Legislative Chamber and offices in 1874 marked the full extent of the timber construction of the General Assembly Building. Construction of the next two additions began in 1883. Both were in brick and were designed by Thomas Turnbull. One of them, the back wing of the library with its small bath house, still remains. The other, an electric generating station, built facing Sydney Street opposite the Government House stables was demolished to make way for the present Parliament Buildings. Power was generated by a 16 horsepower gas engine but was too unreliable to be successful. Through the 1880s a private company later to become the Wellington Municipal Electricity Department (MED) began the development of electricity generation and supply, first only for streets and municipal offices. After 1891 it gained approval to supply private residences and by 1894 we find contracts for the supply of electricity to Government House and Government offices.

Turnbull's 1883 brick addition began as a library but before its completion was changed to Bellamys and this use continued until the fire of 1907. Turnbull's addition included a Members' Lobby between the two chambers. This lobby and its panelling is still discernable although a second storey addition has been built over it. As well as its designed use the Members' Lobby was used for Saturday night dances during the Parliamentary Session.

General Assembly Building
about 1883 looking down
ramp from Hill Street;
Turnbull's brick addition on
left; clerestory lights to
Legislative Council Chamber
over near roof.

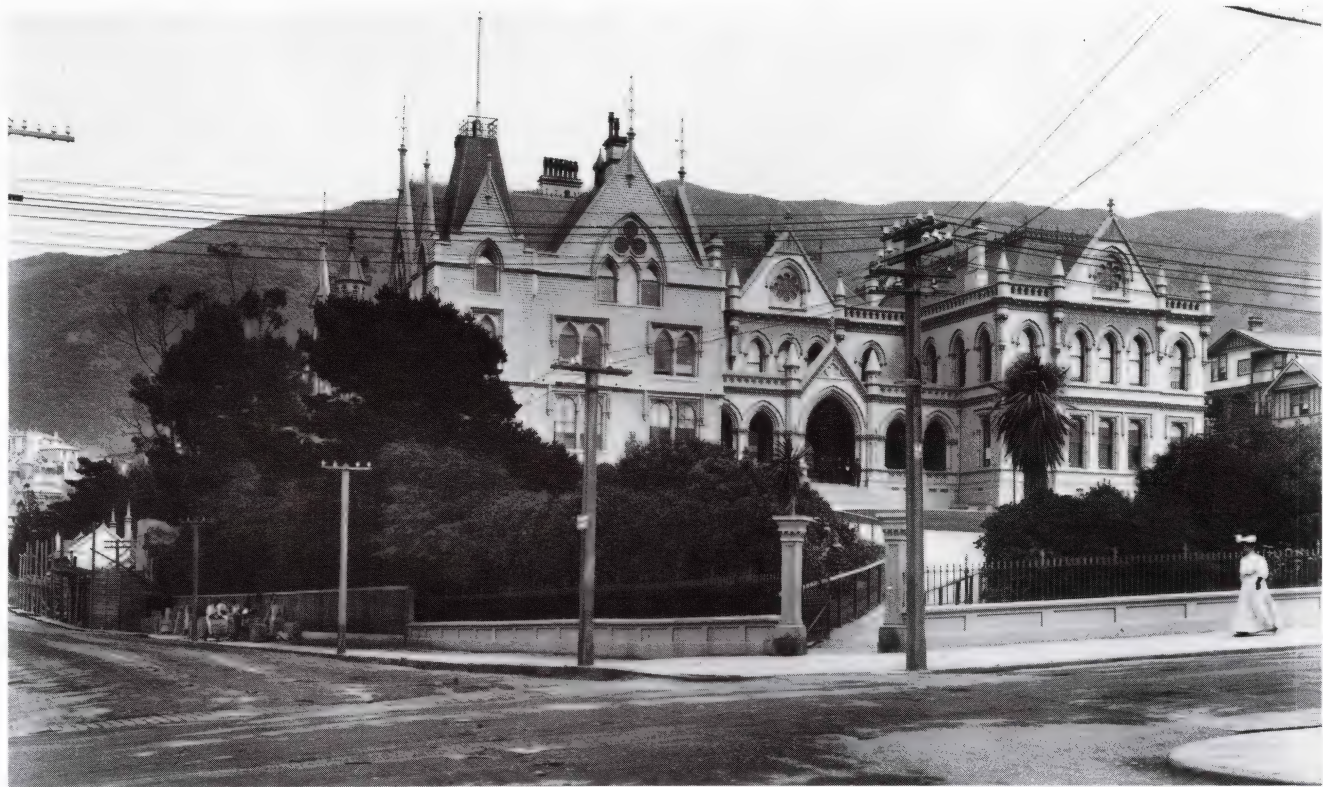




View along Sydney Street
towards 'Wellington Hotel'
generating station and
General Assembly Building
on left; Government House
stables on right; date of
photograph early 1890's.

Far right: Members Lobby of
General Assembly Building;
Seddon third from left.





7 THE LIBRARY AND THE FIRE 1899-1907

From the time the General Assembly moved to Wellington there was continuous pressure to provide proper accommodation for the Library. The first Library was also the smoking room with an inevitable effect on the books. The 1883 building was to be a Library but was diverted to more urgent use. Despite modest expansion the Library had remained essentially the same between 1865 and the end of the century. Various solutions were proposed, probably the most comprehensive being that of 1891. Although not built, this at least set the location for the new Library when construction finally began in 1897. Turnbull's design was for a three storey building but the compromise to the political row that followed the start of construction reduced this to two. Turnbull resigned his commission and asked that his name be removed from the foundation stone. Removed or just plastered over we don't know, but completion of the building was left to the Government Architect. It was occupied from 1899 through to 1901. Just in time it would seem.

Special precautions had been taken in the new building to separate by fire walls and doors the Library proper from the remainder of the building. When the 1907 fire occurred, books in the basement and roof area outside the fire walls were lost, while those within, were unaffected. Of Clayton's splendid timber Gothic building only the brick chimneys remained. The 1883 addition and the unprotected part of the 1899 addition were gutted.



General Assembly Building with new Library 1907; construction started for new Bellamys in Sydney Street.



The remains of the General Assembly Building after the fire, 11 December 1907; view looking towards Molesworth Street, and right, the Members Lobby.



8 PARLIAMENT HOUSE 1907-1922



fter the fire the contract for the new Bellamys in Sydney Street was stopped, a temporary Government House was acquired in Palmerston North and the remains of the General Assembly building were connected by a long bridge to Government House which was converted with additions to offices, Chambers and Bellamys. Parts of the wooden Government Building were taken over and used for Parliamentary accommodation. Attention was then given to rebuilding Parliament. A design competition was organised in 1911 with the South Australian Government Architect, W.L. Vernon, as the sole judge. The competition was won by, John Campbell, the New Zealand Government Architect and one of his assistants, Claude Patton. Campbell's design was a clear break-away from the Gothic style which, starting from the Provincial Council Chambers, had been used consistently in the General Assembly buildings. Levelling the site began in 1911 and the stone was laid in 1912. But construction was delayed by shortages of materials and manpower and work dragged on until 1917 when use of the still uncompleted building commenced. The Chamber was used for the first time in 1918, but it was not until 1922 that the building was finally handed over. The old Government House was kept until 1969 (100 years after it was started) when it was demolished to make way for the Beehive.

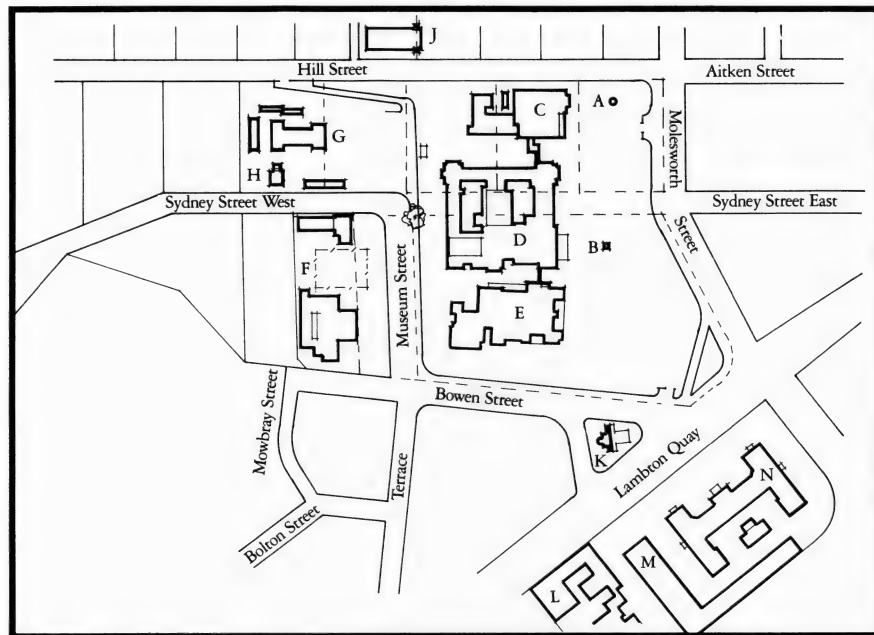
View from Molesworth Street
1912; bridge across Sydney
Street from Library to
Assembly Room in old
Government House; start of
Parliament.







John Campbell's design for Parliament House; the tower, cupolas and structures to left of entrance steps were not built.



MAP 4 (1938)

- | | | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| A | Statue – Ballance | G | Public Works Department | N | Wooden Government Building |
| B | Statue – Seddon | H | House – Custodian | | |
| C | General Assembly Library | J | Basilica | | |
| D | Parliament House | K | Cenotaph | | |
| E | Old Government House (Bellamys) | L | Law Courts | | |
| F | DSIR | M | Temporary Government Building | | |

9 MORE CHANGES TO THE LAND

The 1907 fire and the rebuilding had consequences for the shape of Parliament Grounds. Part of Sydney Street was closed and absorbed into the area. The site of the raupo whare and the temporary cenotaph of the 1920s was transferred to the city along with strips up Bowen Street and Molesworth Street so that those streets could be widened. Museum Street was relocated to roughly its present location and right-of-ways between Hill Street and Sydney Street were granted to the City. Further changes to the area occurred during WWII when the streets to the West of Parliament, Sydney Street up to Charles Fergusson Building, Museum Street and the right of way from Hill Street were closed and the land transferred back to the Government. Prefabricated buildings were erected over this area, the last of which still remains. The brick building built in 1914 on the terrace to the West of the Library was extended in 1941. Since the war, with the exception of 81 Hill Street, all the remaining land lying between Bowen Street and Hill Street from Parliament Grounds up to the motorway, has been purchased for building government offices. Because the Colonial Museum and Laboratory was the first use to which this land was put it was natural that this use developed. From the Laboratory grew the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. After the DSIR moved to Gracefield the buildings were demolished to make way for Bowen State Building, Broadcasting House and Charles Fergusson Building.

10 SMALL AND OLD STRUCTURES



associated with the Museum and Laboratory when it was first built in 1865 was the meteorological station. This was first located in the North-West corner of the General Assembly grounds near Hill Street. The station was a small building in plan, octagonal in imitation of its Greenwich forebear which in turn was in imitation of the Tower of the Winds in Athens. This building was later moved and set up in a number of locations including Bolton Street Cemetery before finally ending up as part of the outdoor station of the meteorological office in Kelburn.

Beside the meteorological station was a water reservoir fed from the spring and reservoir at 260 Tinakori Road. This water supply was to ensure the safety of the timber buildings in the event of fire.

A map of 1891 shows a fire station between the General Assembly building and Molesworth Street. Nearby, but opening onto Molesworth Street, a house had been built about 1865 for the Custodian. This house was still there in 1891. A second house for the Custodian was later built some time before 1913 on part of section 526. For a while this was occupied by MWD before being demolished to make way for Charles Fergusson Building.

The oldest building at present on Parliament Grounds is the 1883 Library Wing; the oldest structure is probably the picket fence along Hill Street and the oldest tree is the Oak. The earliest photograph of the picket fence is about 1872 and the earliest evidence of the Oak is

believed to be about 1869 although it was probably planted 4 or 5 years prior to 1869. The meteorological station is older still and seems to have been set up on the Hill Street site between 1862 and 1865.



The General Assembly
Building 1866;
meteorological station to left
at top of bank; custodian's
house with two dormers to
the right; towards foreground
are the museum,
Government House
gardener's cottage and first
St Pauls.



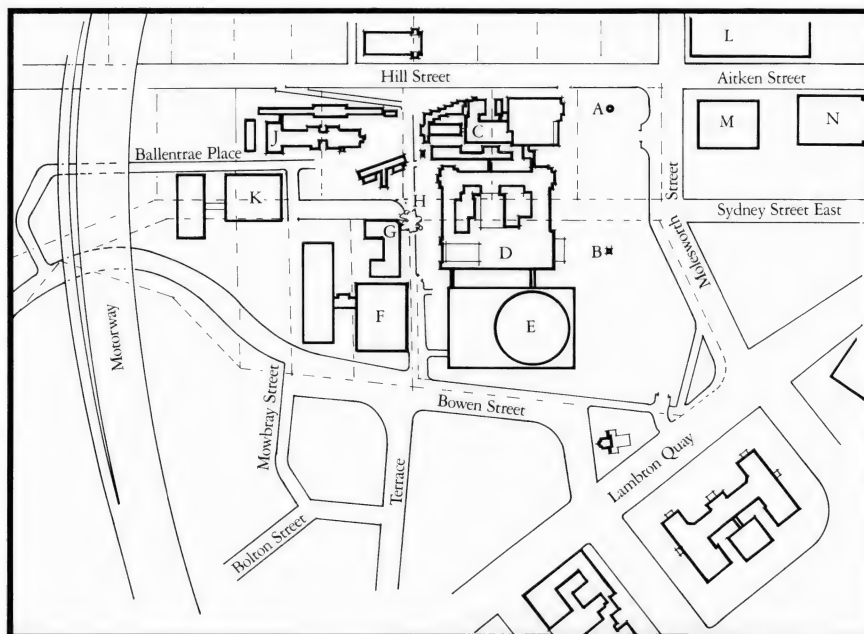
11 THE BEEHIVE AND BEYOND

When in December 1962 Cabinet decided to engage an internationally recognised consultant to advise on the extensions for Parliament they began the process which led first to the engagement of Basil Spence in 1963, then, to his sketch plans of 1964, the start of construction in 1969 and the completion of the Beehive in 1981. The Executive Wing, as it is properly called, is the most recent major expansion of Parliament but there have been a number of other small buildings constructed to provide additional accommodation for those who work in and around Parliament. All the gaps on the roof of Parliament House have been filled, three temporary buildings are clustered around the Library, part of the old Ministry of Works and Development building has been remodelled for Parliament use and most recently 5 Museum Street is being adapted.

The construction of the Beehive caused little change to the shape of Parliament Grounds. Apart from the relocation of the wall along Museum Street, the boundary remained unchanged from 1910. Now with the increase in the number of Members and new services to be provided Parliament has entered upon another growth phase. How this will be finally expressed in building forms has yet to be decided but already the decision has been made to expand the area of Parliament Grounds to include the two town acres 526 and 527.



The Letham family in front of the custodian's house; corner of Molesworth Street and Hill Street.



MAP 5 (1980)

- | | | | | | |
|---|------------------------|---|----------------------|---|------------------|
| A | Statue – Ballance | F | Broadcasting House & | M | Court of Appeal |
| B | Statue – Seddon | | Bowen State Building | N | Vogel Building – |
| C | Parliament Library and | G | 5 Museum Street | | MWD Head Office |
| | Temporary Buildings | H | Oak Tree | | |
| D | Parliament House | J | MWD District Office | | |
| E | Executive Wing | K | Fergusson Building | | |
| | (Beehive) | L | National Library | | |



Model of the Executive Wing
(Beehive); Bowen Street in
foreground.

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The sources of information for even a small book such as this are many but of particular help and interest have been Carter's "Life and Recollections of a New Zealand Colonist", Ward's "Early Wellington" and "Unquiet Earth" by Margaret Alington.



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